

EDITORIAL: What's a frill in city spending?

By [Staff Writer - The Tri-City News](#)

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There is no danger of a Tea-Party style taxpayer revolt in Canada — at least for now. Anti-tax rhetoric is not nearly as virulent this side of the border and Canadians are not nearly as hardline as Americans when it comes to accepting government programs and services.

But there are rumblings at the municipal level that city taxes are growing too quickly. It's difficult to determine how much of this discontent should be directed at Metro Vancouver, whose higher utility fees are tacked on to municipal property taxes.

Still, there are hints that some people think municipal spending should be curbed. A recent survey in Coquitlam found fewer people willing to absorb higher taxes to avoid service cuts and some civic candidates — two in Port Moody and four in Coquitlam — have pledged to keep spending to inflation plus population. They also agree with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business about the need to lower business taxes and to have an auditor monitoring municipal spending.

Putting a lid on tax hikes seems like a reasonable goal until you do the math. What is a frill exactly? The fact is, one person's luxury is another person's must-have.

While everyone agrees that operational inefficiencies should be weeded out of the system, there is a great deal of disagreement over how to cut services or whether doing so is even desirable. Close the pool on holidays, delay repairing roads, let people collect their own garbage — these are not practical solutions to reducing tax hikes.

Indeed, many candidates are loathe to get into this kind of cost-cutting activity and are side-stepping this question entirely, suggesting cities should generate more revenue by partnering more with senior governments or by bringing new businesses to the city.

It's just not that easy to find more revenue. On the other hand, candidates who think it's easy to cut costs should be required to give specifics, not escape with vague promises.

The concerned voter is understandably perplexed given the array of candidates and points of view. But fiscal accountability doesn't end at the ballot box. Budgeting and priority-setting take place every year and there are plenty of opportunities for taxpayers to demand accountability and be heard.

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You aren't listening editor (are you partnered with Moore?). Wastes, collection paid for by taxes, is handed over to companies that make a huge easy profit by transforming it into fuel, electricity, new soil, fertilizer ...). Let them pay for delivery of their raw materials. That is a first step in giving residents freedom from the greed of the taxman! It is about cutting subsidy to business, not cutting service to the taxpayer!
Listen editor; residents need to elect people that will take care of the business of city hall in favour of the taxpayer residents (advantage to taxpayer) so that the people can take care of their own lives without fear of getting short-changed. Few people are like editors that can spend their days observing!
A wise vote is a vote for Eric Hirvonen !